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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD SYMPATHIES AMONG
PARTICIPANTS IN USG-FUNDED PROJECT

REF: A. CAIRO 489
[1](#)B. CAIRO 495

Classified By: Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone for Reason 1.4(d).

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: On March 15, we accompanied a DRL Program Officer on a monitoring visit to a DRL-funded governance project in Minya, a city in Upper Egypt. The project, implemented by the US-based NGO "Street Law International" and its local partner, the Assiut Human Rights Association (AHRA), is designed, according to participants, to familiarize youth leaders with human rights principles, develop grass-roots political skills, and assist local governments in the delivery of services. AHRA is a legally registered Egyptian NGO.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary (cont.): Participants in the session we observed, however, appeared to be drawn exclusively from the ranks of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) supporters and said they had close ties to the leader of the MB parliamentary block, Mohammed Saad Katatni, who represents their parliamentary district. End summary.

[1](#)3. (U) During our March 15 trip to Minya with visiting DRL Program Officer Ramiro Martinez to observe a DRL-funded project in Upper Egypt, we observed a 12-person workshop, and listened as facilitators and participants described their work with the project. Participants told us they meet periodically to discuss local problems and propose solutions. The group we observed chose to focus on youth unemployment and said that it had managed to find jobs for eight young men who had requested assistance. An earlier workshop group focused on improving the delivery of emergency medical services at a local hospital. Other workshops were underway in the Upper Egypt cities of Sohag and Assiut.

[1](#)4. (C) We asked the group if their work with the project had encouraged them to participate in Egypt's local council elections, scheduled for April 8. Several members of the group, with the others nodding their assent, said that the group would not participate, or even vote, as the government had arrested all 25 opposition candidates from the Minya area. (Note: We believe the candidates they are referring to are affiliated with the MB as this is consistent with the MB's reporting of arrests of its members in Minya.) Group members added that if there was an alternative to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) candidates, they would vote for the alternative because "we hate the NDP." To emphasize the point that the group was interested in politics despite its boycott of the upcoming local elections, one of the workshop facilitators told us that 6 of the 12 workshop participants had worked previously on the successful campaign of Mohamed Saad Katatni, now the leader of the MB's

parliamentary bloc, to represent Minya in Egypt's People's Assembly.

15. (C) Issam Eddeen Al Reedy, the Minya representative of AHRA, served as a facilitator for the workshop we observed. He, along with Street Law's local representative, Khaled Eid, is responsible for the project's Minya component. He told us that he selects workshop participants. His criteria is to invite people referred to him "by his contacts." He told us he is also a lawyer and supporter of Katatni. Al Reedy said he represents the 25 opposition candidates jailed in advance of the local council elections (refs A and B), although he is not optimistic he can do anything for them and expects that they will be detained until after the elections. On his and the project's relationship with the local government in Minya, he said it is poor and the government interfered with efforts to improve local service delivery. When the group had problems with the local government, Al Reedy said he went "straight to Mr. Katatni," who intervened on behalf of the project.

16. (C) Comment: While the project may serve an important need, at least some of the participants in the workshop we observed appeared to be drawn from the ranks of Muslim Brotherhood supporters. It may be that other components of the project include participants with a wider range of political views. We note that the local implementing partner, AHRA, is legally registered as an NGO under Egyptian law with the Ministry of Social Solidarity and, at the time the DRL approved the grant, neither the Mission nor DRL had any reason to believe AHRA was anything but an ordinary, non-partisan NGO working in the field of human rights. Moreover, AHRA had no discernible political leanings when we visited its Assiut headquarters in June 2007. Given the difficulty in identifying individual Muslim Brotherhood

members, ensuring that no USG funding goes to Egyptians with links to the MB will remain a constant challenge. In the instant case of the AHRA project in Minya, despite the links we have discovered, as long as AHRA plays strictly by the rules governing foreign funding of NGOs, we see no grounds to suspend or withhold funding. Hence, we will continue to make funding decisions strictly on the merits of the proposals and observed implementation of the projects.

RICCIARDONE